

Alexandria Waterfront Committee, Marina Subcommittee
Notes of Meeting of 9/17/09

Members present: Gosnell, Hafer, Geissinger, Pennington, Pettey
City Staff present: Laura Seidler, RPCA; Kathleen Beeton, Office of Planning and Zoning; Lt. Daniel Bartlett and Sgt. Dan Brill, Alexandria Police Department
Others present: Harry Harrington, ODBC

Pettey distributed the charge to the Subcommittee (Attachment A), as well as a brainstorming summary that the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs sent to Planning and Zoning staff as part of the waterfront planning process.

Ms. Beeton challenged the Subcommittee to look beyond the current marina and consider what could/should be marine features on the waterfront.

Mr. Geissinger recommended prioritizing short and longer-term recommendations.

Law enforcement Issues

Alexandria Police (APD) members discussed law enforcement issues along the waterfront. Some jurisdictional issues are being worked out, while others probably cannot be resolved under current laws. APD will respond to situations where life and limb are at stake, and will sort out later which government has jurisdiction to prosecute. (DC and Coast Guard have jurisdiction in DC waters.) APD members observed that Prince Georges County has a problem policing boats from/at National Harbor. Police need to have a place to park emergency vehicle(s). Members also discussed the idea of a police substation on the waterfront, and the possibility to get a business to donate space for one. APD would need a visible office with some storage (for barricades, etc.). The marina has its own emergency and storm plan, distinct from that of the City. APD probably is not interested in obtaining a police boat.

Economic sustainability of marina

Ms. Seidler reported that the marina breaks even if one only considers services provided to boaters, and not other expenses such as capital & other significant pedestrian traffic costs. An estimated forty percent of services marina staff provide are specific to boaters; the remainder are to the general public.

Current marina size: 62 slips (plus and additional 17 seawall, gazebo and T-Head docking locations). One member noted that 62 slips to too small for a viable marina. Another member suggested that even a marina expansion may not be an economic revenue source but may provide other boating activities that also serve as a greater tourist draw. In addition to slip fees, the City could also obtain revenue from boats through property taxes. Current tax rate is \$.01 per \$1000.00 of assessed value, but the City does not collect the tax because the

amounts are so minimal. Boaters could choose instead to have their boat documented with the Coast Guard for \$105/year, but the Coast Guard could press those boats into service in case of an emergency.

Ms. Seidler noted that any canoe/kayak facility should go on the river north of the current marina, to avoid river traffic and considerable safety issues created with larger boats crossing the river.

Members agreed that even if there were no marina, the City would still need to repair and maintain the bulkheads, and would have dredging and capital costs to maintain docking facilities for commercial boats such as the water taxi.

Given the substantial capital expenses involved in maintaining the waterfront, members discussed the value of future design plans that would minimize damage to shoreline, dredging and trash pick-up.

Possibility of cruise ships docking in Alexandria

Robinson Terminal South currently has deepest draft, which was 19' a year or so ago. Draft is a major issue for larger boats---commercial as well as tall ships. The City has tried to dredge to 17' inside the marina. There was a suggestion to call cruise lines to see if they would be interested in stopping here if water were deep enough. This is something ACVA may be able to do. There was no support for a large commercial-type marina, but subcommittee agreed that it would be good to keep the option open to bring in some commercial ships (200-300 people), as well as tall ships. We would like to encourage bringing tall ships to Alexandria, and tall ships require the drafts similar to small cruise ships, so the effort to maintain adequate docking for cruise ships would not require extra resources. The option of attracting smaller cruise ships should remain on the table and perhaps enlist ACVA to do more research.

Strengths/Weaknesses

Subcommittee considered what the marina contributes to the City:

- Draws tourists
- Provides waterfront vistas
- Provides slips for commercial and private boats
- Provides space for water taxis
- Occasionally provides space for tall ships and cruise ships
- Keeps some semblance of maritime heritage alive

In terms of what the marina doesn't do or doesn't do well:

- Historic interpretation of waterfront – signage, tall ships
- Crumbling infrastructure
- Outdated marina facilities
- Poor commercial docking space
- No reason for families to come back
- Contribute to City revenue

Subcommittee members agreed that the marina supports tourism but does not contribute to general revenue.

Mr. Harrington reported that ODBC has 850 members but only 52 slips. Many ODBC members moor their boats elsewhere.

Jetty

Members discussed the value of a potential jetty or jetties. A jetty could prevent some erosion and some trash from accumulating in the marina. A jetty was proposed in the 1990's but the potential site in Founders Park created controversy. Placement of a jetty would be critical. Could one be placed as far north as Rivergate? We would need permits from DC for a jetty, but the Army Corps of Engineers may help pay for it.